Master of Engineering Committee  
Wednesday, November 11, 2009  
8:00 – 9:00 am, 240 Carpenter Hall

Attendees: Kathryn Caggiano, Chair (ORIE), Graeme Bailey (CS), James Bartsch (BEE), Larry Cathles (EAS), Al George (MAE) David Grubb (MSE), David Lipson (BME), William Olbricht (CBE), Clif Pollock (ECE), Huseyin Topaloglu (SYS), Mark Turnquist (CEE-EM), David Muller (AEP)

Guests: Cathy Dove, Yoanna Ferrara, Jeff Newman, Marcia Sawyer (MAE)

Meeting Minutes

Approval of Minutes from the October 14, 2009 meeting was deferred until the next meeting, pending insertion of the new policy and procedure for the Academic Subcommittee.

Discussion: MEng Students Switching Fields – Al George and Marcia Sawyer

Issue: Usually MEng students who switch fields after they begin the program are non-Cornell students, and often they are international students. These students are the ones that take the most effort for fields to recruit. When MEng students switch fields, their semester’s tuition may be credited to the new field, leaving the field that recruited them uncompensated for recruiting efforts. It was proposed for discussion by MAE that the original field be credited with one semester of tuition if a student switches fields after they arrive at Cornell.

In the course of the discussion it was made clear that the MEC was not questioning the process that allows students to switch from one field to another by filling out a Grad School form and being accepted by a new field. The issue is strictly financial and a matter of fairness.

RGS explained that the current official method of counting student enrollment in the MEng fields uses the 6 Week Frozen Files maintained by the Graduate School. Prior to the file being frozen every MEng field is asked to verify the count of their students, and corrections are made. The 6 Week Frozen file is the official record.

The MEC considered various ways to balance recruiting efforts of the original field and the efforts of the new field to educate the student, including crediting a student’s tuition for the semester to the original field, prorating, splitting tuition 50/50 and distributing tuition to the field where the student is enrolled according the 6 Week Frozen file.

After a thoughtful discussion, it was the consensus of the group that the current official method of counting MEng students in the fields was both the fairest and most efficient administratively. The MEC therefore decided to endorse using the enrollment reported for students by field in the 6 Week Frozen Files for Fall and Spring semesters as the basis for distributing MEng tuition return among MEng fields. For example, if a student completes all the paperwork to switch fields before his/her enrollment is frozen in the 6 Week Frozen File, then the new field will be able to count that student for MEng tuition return for that semester. Otherwise, the student will be counted in the original field, and his/her MEng tuition return will belong to the original field, even if the student’s change of fields becomes official later in the semester.
MEng Day De-Brief

Reviews of MEng Day 2009 were mixed. Some fields reported disappointing numbers and many freshman, while others had a steady stream of juniors and seniors. ORIE noted that they had traffic from non-engineering majors this year.

Recruiting and Marketing

Going around the table, everyone agreed that they were watching for developments in the job market affecting MEng, and it was too early to tell how their fields would fare in this admission season.

Internationally in the fields of materials science and engineering physics MS is widely recognized as the valuable professional engineering degree. It has been difficult for MSE and AEP MEng graduates to get jobs and for the fields to recruit MEng students. David Grubb described a new MS degree program that MSE is marketing as an alternative to MEng. The new MS is a research-based degree, and it is a terminal masters completed in two years. Students cannot continue on to a PhD at Cornell. Tuition is charged at the lower research rate, and an arrangement for tuition return is under consideration by the Provost. Several of the MEng Representatives expressed interest in learning more about the new MS at a future meeting of the MEC.

Career Services Update– Mark Savage and Karin Ash

Karin observed generally that the MEng students were very impressive and versatile, and a pleasure to work with. She said however that they overly rely on on-line job sites and need to network more. Career Services is using a list of CU alumni obtained with the help of RGS to make networking contacts to help MEng find jobs. Karin encouraged developing networking channels at College and field levels, and taking advantage of Cornell Career Net.

Karin described the market for MEng students seeking highly lucrative jobs on Wall St as extremely competitive. International students, who make up around 65% of those Karin is assisting, are having a very difficult time. Even though their records are outstanding, they need sponsorship and Wall St firms have many equally outstanding domestic applicants who are easier to process. In cases where firms accepted TARP money, restrictions are imposed on hiring non-US citizens. To gain a foothold in the US, Karin is encouraging international students to consider small consulting companies and second-tier government (non-military) suppliers, where students of their caliber will be highly sought after. Karin advised that we should better manage the expectations of international MEng students who enter our programs with a goal of working in the US.

In contrast to jobs on Wall St, Karin reported that MEng students in technology fields were receiving multiple offers. MEC members observed that this would be encouraging but such a turnaround has not been noticed at the field level.

Karin’s temporary assignment ends November 20th.

Action Item for University Sub-committee – investigate university’s practice on continuing students’ net ids active after graduation. We lose track of alumni shortly after graduation, and many of these young professionals want to stay connected with their advisors and classmates, and would help current MEng students in their career searches.

Information

- Please review the contacts list on the intranet and send RGS updates
• The office of Diversity Programs in Engineering and RGS are setting up a shared database with information about prospects from recruitment events. More information to follow.

• The first annual Workshop on Business Ethics in Engineering was attended by around 20 MEng students. Although the number was less than hoped for, the organizers of the event were pleased with enthusiasm of the participants and thanked those who volunteered their time to lead discussion groups, such as David Lipson. Lipson said that the feedback he received included many positive comments and a few suggestions—students wanted pre-work and more participation from JGSM.

• Knight Scholarship 2010 information session is scheduled for November 17.